CS Lewis: Home Office Prevent anti-terrorism RICU unit flags up fairytale author as potential sign of far-right extremism

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Reading CS Lewis, creator of the Chronicles of Narnia and one of NI's most famous exports, has been flagged by a UK anti-terrorism unit as a potential sign of 'far-right extremism'.

The Home Office's flagship Prevent scheme, which costs the taxpayer some £49 million per year, has compiled a list of literary works it says are "key texts" for "white nationalists/supremacists".

A report by Prevent's Research Information and Communications Unit (RICU) described how far-right extremists promoted "reading lists" on online bulletin boards.

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Author Douglas Murray obtained the list and published it in the Spectator magazine. It includes one of NI's most famous sons, CS Lewis, author of the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe, part of his Chronicles of Narnia series. Other authors included are JRR Tolkien, Aldous Huxley, Joseph Conrad and George Orwell.

The sculpture of Aslan from the Chronicles of Narnia in east Belfast. Reading CS Lewis, creator of the Chronicles of Narnia, has been flagged by a UK anti-terrorism unit as a potential sign of 'far-right extremism'

Another son of east Belfast, UUP councillor John Kyle, described the list as "bonkers". He added: "I know that communist and totalitarian regimes have viewed Christianity as dangerously subversive, but when the British Government labels CS Lewis' Narnia books a terrorist threat its counter-terrorism unit has lost touch with reality."

Toby Young, General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, told the News Letter that something has gone "very wrong" at Prevent. "The programme is supposed to prevent young people from becoming terrorists, not prevent them reading classic works of English literature or seminal texts in political philosophy," he said.

The list emerged following a major review into the Prevent scheme by William Shawcross, in which he warned it had prioritised countering far-Right activity above

tackling the prime Islamist threat. The News Letter asked the Home Office if the list above was accurate. A spokesman replied: "The work of RICU is crucial to the delivery of Prevent and has helped to position the UK at the forefront of the battle against terrorist propaganda, particularly online terrorist content."